SOME CONSIDERATIONS

In relation to the Act of 2 January, 1649. for Subscribing the ENGAGEMENT.

1. *Consideration.*

THat this Engagement is pressed on many who have taken divers Oaths and Obligations already, to the number of six or seven, and is it not then possible that it may (appear at least to the consciences of those so pre-obliged to) be contrary to some of those former Obligations? And shall not then the urging this Engagement on such men either lead them into sin if they subscribe with a doubting conscience, or else expose them to the sharp penalties in the Act if they refuse?

2d. *Consid:*

That this Engagement brings into employment (both in Civill and Ecclesiasticall affairs) known Malignants, men of no conscience, men dis-affected to the present Government, men of prophane lives; these subscribe readily, and without scruple, onely the conscientious man he is shut out.

3dly, That this Engagement is pressed in such a way, that where scruples arise about it, no man is permitted to clear his own scruples; Neither are they which tender it, enabled to give forth in what sence it is to be taken, but it must be subscribed blind-fold, with submission to the implicite meaning of the Imposers. Which proceeding is no way agreeing with the nature of a solemn Obligation.

4th. That the Liberties of the Subject were once solemnly sworn by most men in this Nation, to be equally maintained with the privileges of Parliament. And this, first in the *Protestation*, enjoyned by the Parliament to be taken through the whole Nation, *Anno* 1641. and 2dly, in the Nationall *Covenant*, *Anno* 1643. If then the greatest of the Subjects Rights and Liberties be taken away, *viz:* the benefit of the Laws under which he was born, and which are his birth-right; and this onely for refusing to subscribe a new Obligation (in doing whereof; he thinks he shall offend God) how to reconcile this way with those preceding solemn Obligations, we conceive deserves consideration.

5th. *Conf:* That these kinde of Tyes never effected what they were entended for, but in a short revolution of time were wont to be turned as Artillery against them who first devised them for their own securitie, as frequent examples in all Histories do manifest.

Nay, as if God would testifie from heaven his dislike of this way, it hath been frequently observed to boad little good to the Imposers; And (not to go far for observation) witnesse the Bishops Canonicall Oath entended to be imposed on this whole
1. Nation, who stood a very little time after the Oath should have
2. been taken. 2. Then the contriving of the Nationall Covenant, so penned as to make most for the Presbyterian Government. And whether the said Government did not from that time loose ground in the hearts both of our Governors and people. 3. And
3. now we tremble to think what may be the sad consequences of this so penall pressing this Ty on the consciences of men; And those (some of them) men who are well known (so far as man can judge) to be dear in the sight of Christ, and whose sufferings he esteems his own.

6ly, This practice contradicts the former endeavours after liberty of Conscience of the present Authority, when they were over ballanced in the Government, by men of another judgement. We beg that those Times may be remembred. What is our case now, was their case then; And that they would deal with

with us, as they would then have willingly been dealt withall; And who knows how soon God may again state them in their former or a like condition, especially if they shall stop their ears at the cry of their brethren in the times of their suffering!

Because we think that we shall offend God by subscribing, shall we be therefore punished? If we raised trouble or sedition under the present Government, somewhat might be pleaded to justifie these proceedings against us. But when we lie under no crime, save (at the most) an errour in our Judgements (a crime which is daily passed over, even where God himself is often highly dishonored) and that only on this ground, that *Conscience must not be forced.* Now to fall so heavy on us, the case being the very same, what can it argue save an higher esteeme of the authority and command of man then of God?

Nay more; because of our sincerity and plain dealing, we are punished: For if we could dissemble, and subscribe whatever is offered us without regarding, we might escape the censure.

The multitudes of Malignants, and carnall wretches of all sorts, who declare among their freinds, that their Heart and Hand went not together in subscribing, And that they did it to keep them in their severall employments. And that they had rather fall into Gods hand to reckon with them for the sin, then into the Parliaments hand, to deale with them for their estates and employments. These are the men whom this Act makes good Common-wealths-men. But the tender Conscience whose welfare was once so valued by the Parliament, that he was taken care of, in all capitulations with the King, he is now unworthy protection, and thrust from his Birth-right, the benefit of the Law. The consideration whereof, doth cause us to think that the first contrivance of this way of proceeding had it's rise from the Jesuite and Malignant party, thereby to separate and divide us more and more among our selves, and so to weaken and ruine us by our selves, according to that their old tried and approved Maxime, *Divide & impera.*

7th. *Cons:* That it cannot probably be imagined that sober men that now refuse subscribing, and so run on the sharp cen-

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ſure of the Act ſhould have any other ends of refuſing beſides Conſcience as the caſe now ſtands. For what good can any man hope for, by any oppoſition of here and there a private man againſt the preſent Government; were it not the wiſeſt way to do as the Magiſtrate requires, and the readieſtway to preferment and employment? if Conſcience would permit it? And though ſome men might deſire that the Government were in other hands, and wiſh for a change, yet when it ſhall be conſidered what horrid Calamities any violent alterations muſt needs bring, there is no ingenuous man but muſt needs abhor the thought of ſwimming to his deſires through ſuch Seas of Nationall calamities as are like to attend it, (which very Conſideration hath been formerly juſtly made an aggravation of the wickedneſs of thoſe Counſels by which the late King acted, that they were willing their native Countrey ſhou'd become a deſolation, and a feild of blood, rather then the deſignes they drove on ſhould faile of accompliſhment.)

Beſides, after much blood-ſhed and miſery endured to bring about a deſired alteration, they might poſſibly fail too of what they contend for, and they may eaſily foreſee it. For may it not be a thing in queſtion whether new Governors will mend the matter, or be better then the old? Nay may it not be ſuſpected they may be worſe, as is frequently ſeen where Government is acquired with difficult conteſts, and therefore the victor eſteems himſelf the more abſolute, and ſo conſequently more at his own will in ruling.

8t. Conſ:

May not the preſent ſtate of our Affairs teach us the pernicious conſequences of laying obligations on the people; What is made the great hinderance of reconciliation with *Scotland?* Is it not the Covenant? This is as the barrs of a Caſtle holding and continuing our diſcords. What have any among us elſe to pretend who wiſh well to *Scotland?* though it be but a pretence? And this way of obliging the people, and yet refuſing to interpret or put limits to thoſe obligations, is a way to perpetuate ſtrife, to multiply Quere's, diſputes, and entanglements of the conſcientious of the Nation to their lives end, and is that which Godly

Chriſtians

Christians both of late and former times have so much complained of.

Neither did it ever prevent the troubles feared, or secure the obedience desired by the Magistrate: Other wayes of security may be thought of, either by a premise of their own penning, or the undertaking of freinds, or the like, which wayes ought to be accepted, Because he that is so conscientious as that he will rather suffer then subscribe any form at which he scruples, it is to be presumed of such a man, that he makes conscience that what he voluntarily subscribes shall binde him.

Again, if men offend by disturbance of the Government under which they live, we plead not for such, let them receive severe punishment. But shall men be punish't before they offend?

As the result of these Considerations we add what we think.

1. THat it were much more for the glory of God, if Magistrates would trust God with their Government, and commit both it and their persons to him, and not to think themselves ever a whit the more safe by tying man unto them, and the rather because this way hath so oft failed them who have used it. Those that have been, and are Incendiaries in a State, are not withheld by such bonds as these, nor was it ever known that any such Engagement could make him a freind who was not so before. Oh trust God and beware of unbeleif.

They who have seen much of God in former transactions of their affairs, even to admiration, have lesse reason then others to make use of such triviall mediums for their establishment as these are. Especially where this course is attended with the sufferings of so many men truly fearing God.

2dly. This (we are sure of, That wherever this project of engaging had it's beginning and Rise, and whatever the aimes and purposes were of the Imposers, yet) at the present it involves many men who out of conscience dare not subscribe, who yet do verily beleeve, that they must stand or fall with the present Government, and are wholly for them in their judgements. And

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think their welfare and ſafetie to be bound up together with theirs; yet are theſe layed in the ſame balance (by this Act) with the worſt Enemies.

3ly, That hereupon the perſecution of Godly men now, is higher in divers reſpects then in the times of the power of Prelacie. And this, whether we conſider the Numbers of the ſufferers, or the penalties impoſed; for the former it is too evident, and as for the latter, *viz:* the Penalties impoſed, if compared with the Penalties in this Act, in ſome caſes they were far ſhort. For ſometimes indeed if a Puritane durſt oppoſe, he might be caſt into priſon, yet even there he had the liberty to make the beſt of his eſtate if he had any, to feed himſelf withall, and to maintain himſelf: whereas now if he have ten thouſand pounds owing him, he is at his Debtors courteſie whether he will pay him a penny or not. This Act tels them a new way how to pay old Debts.

In the 4th. place we adde this Quere.

Quere, Whether it be not the duty of every beleever to ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free? and being by him redeemed to himſelf (that we might ſerve him without fear) not to ſuffer our ſelves to be brought in bondage to the wils of men? Not that we deny the Magiſtrates power to require ſecurity for the obedience of men who give occaſion of ſuſpition. But we deny the Magiſtrate all power of ruling in the Conſciences of them that are under him, which is directly the matter in queſtion; which appears thus.

Firſt, becauſe he will take no other ſecurity but ſuch as ſhall entangle the Conſcience.

2ly, Becauſe he requires from us a promiſe which ſhall binde us unto him as of Conſcience, and yet refuſeth to declare or expound himſelf where doubts ariſe about that promiſe. Hence it appears, that he layes a ſnare for the Conſcience; reſerving to himſelf alway a liberty to bend that obligation which way he liſts.

Hence ariſe two evill conſequences.

Firſt, we are deprived of our Chriſtian liberty being brought

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in subjection to the meer will of man, in matter of Conscience.

2dly, A Gap is opened for us to be evill spoken of, if the conformity of our lives be not according to that Obligation which we have ensnared our selves withall, which yet cannot be, while there is something in the Obligation the extent whereof we must not know.

Concerning our Christian Liberty, see the words of *Calvin Just. l. 3. ca. 19. Sect. 14.*

Faithfull Consciences having received such prerogatives of liberty are exempt from all power of men, for it is unmeet that either Christ should loose the thanks of his so great liberality, or Consciences their profit; neither ought we to think it a slight matter, which we see to have cost Christ so dear, namely, which he valueth not with gold or silver, but with his own blood, so that Paul sticketh not to say, that his death is made void if we yeild our selves into subjection to men, for he travaileth about nothing els in certaine Chapt. of the Epist. to the Gallat. but to shew that Christ is darkened or rather destroyed to us, unless our Consciences stand fast in their liberty, which verily they have lost if they may at the will of men be snared with the bonds of Laws and Ordinances.

For a Conclusion.

We pray God to put it into the heart of the Parliament now at length to relax their proceedings against Non-subscribers: and to repeale their Act, It having already done them all the good service it is like to do them, the dint of it now being mostly turned on the conscientious man, to whom it is daily made a snare, a Tentation, an hinderance of his outward comforts, putting him from his employments and exposing him to poverty. Or if not repealed, yet that at least there might be a difference made among them which will not subscribe, whereas now all are involved under the same penalties, as if all mens refusals were upon the same principles, whereas it may be easily manifested, that many refuse to subscribe who yet are no way disafected to the present Government, and others there are (of less Conscience) who doe subscribe, (and thereby evade the dent of the Act) and yet do hate both the Govern ment and Governours.

It may be remembred, that

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There was never yet any Rule so generall, but did admit of some Exception; and as likely it is to finde one shoe to fit every mans foot, as to pen one obligation to close with every mans Spirit, especially (as was before said) Men being already so far pre-obliged.

As } A Christian ought not { to act according to an erring Conscience.
So } { to be enforced to act against Conscience though erring.

FINIS.